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New town manager Tanya Lane

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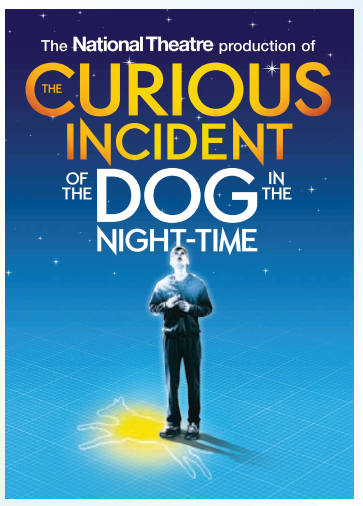

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QUOTE OF NOTE:

"We want girls to realize that running is fun. It's empowering. We want to set them on a path of a lifetime of fitness."
– *Caitlin Cunningham*

See story page 10

ON THE COVER

Tanya Lane, who had served as town clerk since 2003, is now the town manager.

Photo by Lisa Brisson
See story page 6

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Playing ball

Hepple is in his third season with the Mets organization

Mike Hepple pitched for Eastern Connecticut State University. He was the 31st player in ECSU history to sign a professional contract and the first alumnus to sign with a major league organization since 2007.

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Although he was a Boston Red Sox fan growing up, Mike Hepple has switched loyalties. In fact, his entire family has, ever since he was signed as a pitcher by the New York Mets organization.

"Since I signed, my whole family switched over to the Mets. There are a lot of Mets fan in my family," he said with a laugh.

This is his third season with the team. After graduating from Newington High School and Eastern Connecticut State University, he went undrafted and played one season in an independent league. Then his father Peter went on a service call for his business, AAA Appliance, at Roland Johnson's house.

"I was at the service call at Rollie Johnson's house and said, 'How come you haven't taken a look at Mike?'" Peter Hepple recalled.

Johnson, a scout for the team, asked where Mike was playing.

"He said, 'I'll take a look at him.' They met. He liked him; the Mets liked him," Peter said.

Talk about like father, like son. Johnson, a Newington resident, had previously worked for the St. Louis Cardinals organization and had signed Peter.

"I played very little. I went to St. Petersburg, Fla., and played for three or four months," he said.

The father knew his son had talent from the start.

"He's got a very strong arm. He threw hard even as an 11 year old, as a 12 year old. That's a gift," he said.

"You either have it or you don't. He's been a pitcher his whole life, never a hitter. It's been baseball all the way."

He helped make certain that Mike didn't do too much.

"He threw very hard at a very young age. I didn't let him throw a curve ball until he reached maturity. That probably helped his arm," Peter said.

"We kept pitch counts and he never [threw] more than 60, 70 pitches a game. That's probably why he doesn't have any arm issues."

"My dad was a big part of it, my brother [Jimmy] too. My dad was really involved. I remember playing in T-ball and up through Little League. My dad was sometimes my coach. Those are some of the best memories I have. Playing Little League was just a lot of fun," Mike, 26, said.

"I always wanted to be a pitcher. Part of the reason was I could never really hit that well. My dad was a pitcher; he had a lot to teach me. That's always what I wanted to do."

He made his Mets organizational debut with the Brooklyn Cyclones (Short-Season A), then played with the St. Lucie Mets (High A).

"Last year I made the all-star game in St. Lucie. The following season the Mets selected me to pitch in the Arizona Fall League from October to November 2015. It was myself and five other New York Mets, which was a high point of my career so far," Mike said.

"I try to make adjustments, little improvements day by day."
– Mike Hepple

He made seven appearances for the Salt River Rafters in the Arizona league. This year he started the season with the Binghamton Mets (AA) before being sent back to St. Lucie.

"He's a great kid. Hopefully, he gets through this bump in the road. The goal is to get in the Major Leagues," Peter said.

"He's very motivated to do what he has to do to get back. He's a very motivated kid," his mother Lee said. "I think he's fortunate to have talent and opportunity. His success is due to his hard work and perseverance."

Pitching Coach Glenn Abbott agreed.

"Mike has a strong work ethic and he is using that as a foundation to improve his game against tough competition in a challenging environment," Abbott said.

"Last year, there [were] a couple of mechanical tweaks that Coach Phil Regan worked with me on. They went a long way in staying consistent in the strike zone," Mike said.

"This year, I'm going through some growing pains right now. Really, it's just about finding a groove and having a consistent delivery with all your pitches," he added.

Both Abbott and Regan are former Major League Baseball pitchers.

Mike noted that the competition consistently has increased at each step.

"Every level I've moved up, I would say you're basically taking the best hitters of the lineup from the year before. They're more disciplined hitters," he said.

"You have to try to work down in the zone. They'll punish your mistakes the higher you go; they're going to make you pay for your mistakes. At the lower levels and in college, you can get away with more stuff."

He's worked hard to rise to that level.

"I've gotten bigger and stronger after I signed with Mets. I've gained weight, I've gotten stronger. There are some really good coaches in the system that I've taken a lot of infor-

mation from and incorporated into my own game," he said.

"I try to make adjustments, little improvements day by day. It's just about showing up to the field every day and making every single day focused on getting better. That's what it's all about," he added.

He has a steady routine that he follows.

"From when I wake up, I eat the same foods every day. I try to go to bed at the same time. It's a routine I'm in, eating similar foods each day, warming up and working out at the same time and having a routine and a schedule. Before a game, I get focused and locked in to be ready when my name is called in the game," Mike said.

"I've just got to try to keep it simple. When you're on the mound, you've really got to try to block out everything else and execute the pitch. It's really as simple as it sounds."

In the off season he comes back to town, where in addition to his parents, he has the support of his siblings John, a pilot and his fiancé, Trish, and two daughters; Jimmy, an environmental health and safety manager; and Allie, who attends Rutgers University pursuing a degree and career in dance and education.

He keeps a consistent routine even in the off season.

"I work out in the morning. I throw with a buddy who's in the Colorado Rockies and one in the Yankees," he said.

Later in the day, he'll go to Baseball City in Hartford to give pitching lessons for children ages 8 to 17.

"It's really rewarding just to have somebody come in that wants to learn and actually see the growth and the progress after a few weeks of going through drills and sharing my knowledge with the kids. It's just really rewarding to see the kids grow and succeed during the spring," he said.

Mike Hepple played in Newington Little League, often coached by his father, Peter.

He does find time to kick back.

"We'll go fishing a lot. I like to golf. I spend time with my friends. I hang out with my family. I don't get to see them much during the season," Mike said.

While he has bigger dreams, he tries to stay focused in the moment.

"The goal was to reach the Major Leagues, but you've got to take it day by day. I try to get better that day, to stay in the present and try to let the rest take care of itself. I try to do my best that day and let the chips fall where they may," he said.

"I just want to do the best that I can. I don't like to think about outside factors. I'm going to control what I can control, what I'm doing on the mound, having a good outing each time out, that's all I can control."

His father has some advice.

"Throw strikes," Peter said with a laugh. "We disagree on pitching philosophy. I believe you should push off the rubber and he doesn't. He's more successful than I was, so I have to defer to him."

He also has a little life advice.

"Be honest and be a good person, which he is, they all are," he said.

"Professionally, we're just happy he's doing what he wants to do. He's living his dream. We've been very lucky that the kids have all been kind of focused. [They're doing] what they like to do."

Mike Hepple certainly is.

"Just being signed by the Mets was probably the best opportunity I could have asked for. This organization has been a blessing with the coaches I've had and the opportunity to grow as a pitcher," he said.

"Even on a bad day, it's so fun to complete. All we're doing is playing baseball. It's fun for me to beat the other guy; it's an adrenaline rush. That's what I love most about the game." **NL**

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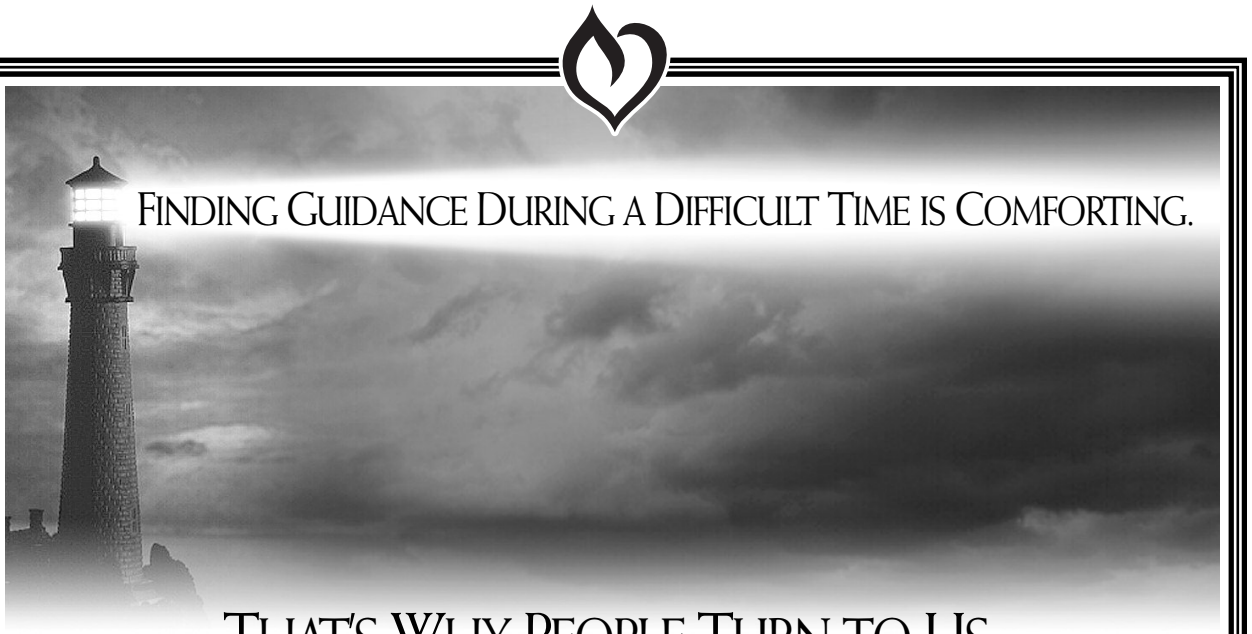

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Tanya Lane settles in

New town manager knows she faces many challenges

by Mark Jahne
Editor

It has been a little more than a month since Tanya Lane was appointed town manager by the Town Council. She knew what to expect when she accepted the job and is beginning to establish her priorities and management style.

Lane was town clerk when her predecessor, John Salomone, resigned under pressure in January. She was named interim town manager and has held both jobs since. That will continue until she uses her new authority as the town's chief administrator to appoint a town clerk to replace her.

Although this is her first job as a town manager, Lane is no stranger to municipal government and finances. She has been part of Newington's government for the past 14 years as town clerk and has additional experience in her hometown of Westbrook.

Lane grew up in Clinton and graduated from Morgan High School. She also attended American International College in Springfield, Mass. She has been married 40 years and is the mother of two adult children.

She loves the shoreline but is also fond of Newington and will relocate here with her husband before the year ends.

"By charter, I have to move here within six months," she said.

Lane holds numerous professionals credentials, including certified town clerk, certified municipal clerk and master municipal clerk. She is a member of the New England Association of City and Town Clerks and served five years as a board member of the New England Municipal Clerks Institute, of which she is a graduate.

She also has donated her time and energy to various causes.

"I've had numerous leadership roles in volunteer activities," she said.

Lane was elected to the Westbrook Board of Finance three years ago. She resigned that post upon agreeing to take on her new job here. She was the 2015 winner of the Holbrook Award presented for community service with dignity and distinction.

"I thought that was the culmination of my career, but this job opportunity fell in my lap," she said. "I did not apply, I was approached."

Lane had a good relationship with her predecessor Salomone.

"We had an amicable relationship and a good professional relationship," she said.

She may be 67 years old, but she has no interest in retiring anytime soon. Lane said her energy level remains high. She expects a smooth transition from the town clerk's office to her new space down the hall and around the corner.

Her existing relationships with all of the town department heads will be helpful to her as she transitions.

"It's not difficult for me to acclimate to this position," she said.

Lane comes into her new post with an awareness of what's going on

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in town. She knows that there is contention on the Town Council and that members often take opposing positions based upon party affiliation.

"I certainly have my challenges laid out for me," she said.

There are differences of opinion based along party lines – a common theme throughout the years in Newington politics – but the Republicans hold the council majority, so they get the final say.

She is a registered Republican, but knows that she must treat all nine councilors individually and fairly, and conduct herself in a non-political manner. If one of them asks her for an official document, they will all receive a copy.

"Information goes out to everybody. I have an open dialogue with most of them," she said.

She also is cognizant of the fact that being town manager is not a 9 to 5 job.

"It's clearly 24/7. What I bring to the table is I have been an elected official. I've been in the fish bowl and under the looking glass," Lane added. "The residents need to see the town manager out and about."

She believes that each council member has his or her personal voice and this must be respected. She expects to seek input and advice from members of both parties.

Lane anticipates that she will have to make some difficult and unpopular positions. She's prepared for that.

"I have no problem being the bad guy. I have no problem being behind the scenes," she said.

She added that her job is not for everyone, especially those with a thin skin. Town managers can sometimes become the target of public criticism and disdain, which happened to Salomone over time.

She has already compiled a priority list of projects that she hopes to accomplish, which includes renovating town hall, resolving the community center's many issues, expanding the Lucy Robbins Welles Library and renovations to Anna Reynolds School.

"There is a lot of infrastructure we have to deal with," she said.

Lane is confident that renovating town hall can be achieved despite all the false starts over the years. Voters, she believes, will approve the project if it accomplishes the basic needs of the town without any added features.

"If we give them something viable, I think it has a great chance of success," she said.

Mayor Roy Zartarian is pleased that the talent to replace Salomone existed in-house, and the town was thus able to avoid the time and expense of a national search. He is confident she will do a fine job.

"We think she's exhibited the necessary leadership qualities over the past six months. … We've got exactly what we need in-house," Zartarian said.

The new town manager's salary is $137,000 per year. **NL**

Photo by Mark Jahne

Tanya Lane is getting accustomed to her new role as town manager.

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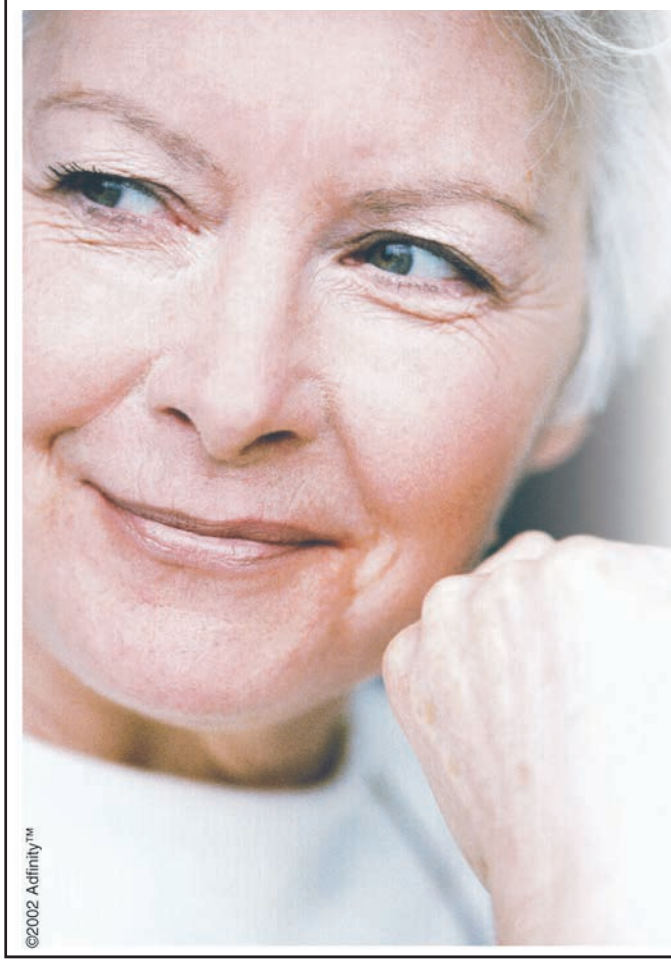

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Tennis experiences an upswing in Newington

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

As the long days of summer continue, visitors at Mill Pond Park are likely to see a rise in rackets swinging and bright green balls flying through the air.

The town Parks and Recreation Department has seen a rising interest in tennis and has responded to that by increasing the number and availability of programs offered to children and adults.

"Tennis seems to be cyclical," Superintendent of Parks and Recreation William DeMaio said. "I don't see a reason why we can't promote tennis to the highest degree."

Helping to promote the sport in town are

Photo by Allie Rivera

With a recent push for more tennis, Parks and Recreation staff want to provide more opportunities for children to learn the sport.

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the eight courts located at Mill Pond Park, four of which are clay and four of which are Har-Tru green clay, made of crushed stone and considered more durable.

"The community has invested in beautiful tennis courts," DeMaio said. "The best thing to do when you have a great facility is to flood it with participants."

To get there, he and other staff are focusing on teaching the game to children and adolescents.

"The only way to grow the game of tennis is to make sure young people are playing tennis," DeMaio said.

To that end, tennis has become part of the weekly schedule in Parks and Recreation's summer program for youth. The roughly 150 children who participate get tennis lessons twice a week on small makeshift courts set up on the basketball courts in Mill Pond Park.

The department invested in low-compression balls that allow children to practice the sport without sending the spheres flying off in every direction.

"They're getting the opportunity to learn the game, but they aren't running around chasing balls," DeMaio said. "It's more learning and thus more fun."

Keeping the game fun is an important aspect to Bob Dean, the tennis coordinator.

"We're trying to grow the game of tennis. We don't want to just introduce tennis, but make it stick with them," Dean said. "If they like it and they're having fun, they'll stick with it."

In addition to the summer program for children, young people in town have ongoing opportunities to further learn and practice the sport through Parks and Rec's youth tennis program for ages 4 and older.

Both DeMaio and Dean said they feel it is important to start a love of tennis at a young age. They also agreed that tennis is a unique sport because it can be played at any stage of life.

"Tennis is a great sport for a lifetime," Dean said. "We have people playing who are 5 up to people in their 80s."

DeMaio contends tennis is beneficial for adults and senior citizens not only because of the exercise it provides, but its social aspect.

"The seniors program has been going on for a long time," Dean added. "We typically get somewhere between 15 and 25 players."

For the adult program, residents can purchase a membership for $40 that gives them a discount rate for use of the courts. Adults also have the opportunity to register for private, semi-private or group lessons.

"The prices are reasonable, especially compared to a country club or someplace like that," Dean said.

To further this push for tennis in town, both men were on hand at the annual Life Be In It Extravaganza July 16 to enable people of all ages to learn more about the sport.

"Instead of not having anybody at our tennis courts, we want to highlight our facility," DeMaio said. "When people are coming from all over the state, when they walk by, they'll see the tennis courts in use."

Parks and Rec offered free lessons to children and adults that day, as well as a free fast-serve competition for which it acquired a radar gun to measure speed.

With the recent increase in opportunities for tennis, DeMaio said he hopes everyone in town will have the chance to learn more and explore the sport by utilizing the facilities at Mill Pond Park.

"Tennis is a lifelong sport and we have these great facilities here for the people of Newington," he said. **NL**

For more information visit newingtonct.gov or call 860-665-8666.

"The community has invested in beautiful tennis courts. The best thing to do when you have a great facility is to flood it with participants."

– William DeMaio

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Courtesy photos

The rain could not keep Newington members of Girls in Stride away from the 5K road race they prepared to run.

"We want girls to realize that running is fun. It's empowering."

– Caitlin Cunningham

Up and running

Groups for all ages share a love of the sport, prepare for events

by Alicia B. Smith
Staff Writer

Runner and author John Bingham has said of himself, "The miracle isn't that I finished, it's that I had the courage to start."

Running is something that most people can do. While it's a matter of getting up and moving your legs as fast as you can, there is a lot of mental toughness that goes with it, especially considering that running can be a solitary endeavor.

Sometimes it helps to bring a friend.

Running enthusiasts throughout Greater Hartford have been producing small miracles of their own by introducing the sport to others and helping them take those first daunting strides. Groups for children and adults are popping up and find their membership growing.

The dominant sound one warm evening was from the feet of a group of runners as they ran laps on an oval track. One by one, they came to the starting line, only to continue on.

The cadence their feet created was occasionally interrupted by a whistle, an indication it was time to slow the pace. The next tweet of the whistle would tell them to speed up.

"I beat my record, I beat my record," gasped one boy when he finally crossed the finish line. He had just completed eight laps around the track.

Krissy Mok, the whistle wrangler and coach, founded MPower Youth Sports as a way to introduce boys ages 6 to 14 to running. She is a life-long runner and coach for Girls in Stride, a running group that trains young girls to run a 5K (3.1-mile) road race.

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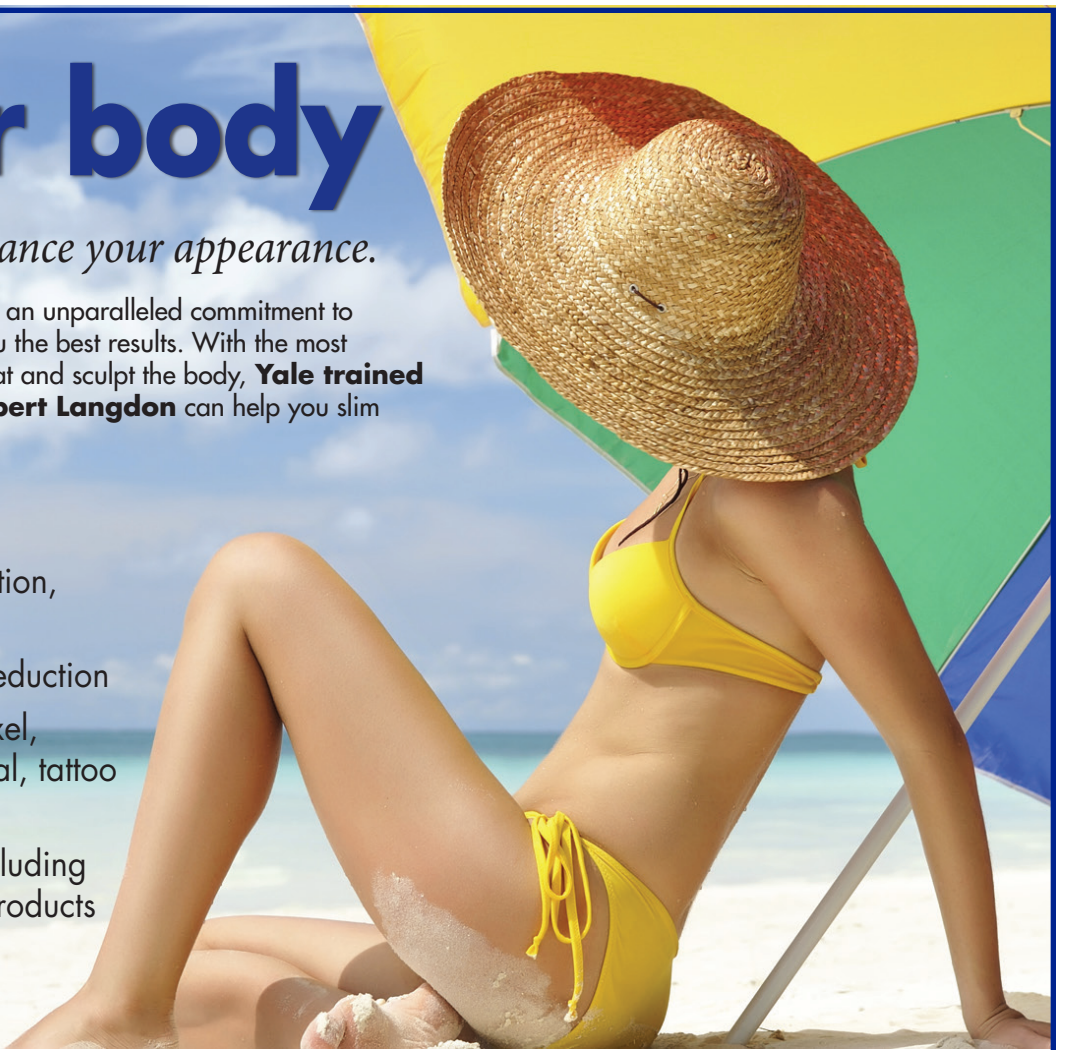

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The Girls in Stride in Newington have fun during practices as they get in shape to run a 5K.

Mok, who lives in Farmington, understands that running can provide a sense of confidence, keep people fit and provide some quiet time. She has witnessed the changes it brings to those in her Girls in Stride group.

Taking what she learned from that group, Mok organized a similar group for boys; MPower Youth Sports is now in its third season. It began this past spring, with training to run the Celebrate! West Hartford 5K in June. There were two more sessions in preparation for other 5Ks.

Mok has had as many as 30 boys in her group and noticed that it attracts three different types: athletes who want to stay in shape and build their endurance during their off season, youths who love to run, and "then we have kids – this is the most important sector – kids who want to do a sport, but don't feel confident to do a team sport."

The coach creates an environment where the boys do not compete with one another. Mok hopes all her runners improve over time and have fun.

Alex Wang, 14, said he decided to join because basketball season had ended.

"It's very fun," he said. "It's straightforward. You don't focus on a tactic. I let my mind run a lot."

Zach Halstead agreed.

"It's a good thing to relax and get away from your life for a while."

When the session first begins, runners start slowly and understand it is OK to walk at first. Eventually they will alternate between walking and running until the time comes when they will run the entire distance.

Mok has an assistant volunteer coach, Andrew Miller, and several parents – inspired by what their sons are doing – who come to practice and run, too.

"Race day is amazing, it's such a special day," she said.

The boys encourage one another all along the route and most stay at the end of the race until the last one crosses the finish line. During the June race, MPower Youth Sports runners wore orange T-shirts as a way to distinguish themselves from others.

Runner Lisa Pillow of West Hartford co-founded Girls in Stride with Glenn Marcella in 2010 and recently expanded the running

group to Farmington, Newington and Glastonbury. It trains girls ages 6 to 14 to run a 5K. In the spring, the girls run the Celebrate! West Hartford 5K and a second session in the fall runs a winter race.

"Initially, we thought of exposing girls to running and we'd reach out to those who may not play a team sport," Pillow said. "We have also reached other girls who play a sport, to build endurance."

Each week the girls meet and run laps as coaches guide them through running concepts, such as pacing and form.

"They really benefit from doing their running together," Pillow said.

The girls also work to meet other people in the group and often will have "homework" to do after practice, such as trying to eat one more vegetable or piece of fruit. They benefit from having the support and encouragement of others in the group.

"We really honor that and try to teach the girls to be supportive of each other and help them through the practice," Pillow said.

Prior to the race, she and her coaches create a mock race so the runners, especially those new to the event, can gain an understanding of what race day will be like.

"Running was something that I just loved, even in high school," Pillow said. "I'd get up and run before school. It's just a way to clear my head and get ready for the day and it makes you feel good."

Caitlin Cunningham was introduced to Pillow and Girls in Stride while she worked at Fleet Feet in West Hartford. She had an interest in starting a running group for girls, so when she heard what Pillow had done and that Newington was interested in starting such a group, she began one that practices at Mill Pond Park.

Cunningham, who lives in Simsbury, is now in her fourth season of coaching a Girls in Stride group.

"It's fun," she said.

She also appreciates the support that the other Girls in Stride groups give one another. Coaches will often reach out to others to get ideas and share information about what each group is doing.

More members have joined Newington Girls in Stride since its inception and, like its neighboring group in West Hartford, they also ran the Celebrate race.

"In a lot of sports, running can be a punishment. We want girls to realize that running is fun. It's empowering. We want to set them on a path of a lifetime of fitness," Cunningham said.

"A lot of parents ask us, 'Can my daughter really run a 5K?' Yes, they can; they train for it," she said, adding that some of the mothers have decided to train for the race, too.

Having a group environment to get started is beneficial.

"Running can seem pretty challenging. It's you and your own mind, but if you have a buddy you can talk to while you are doing it, that helps with pacing," Cunningham said.

"I think running helps a lot with goal setting. You can set short-term goals, long-term goals – what you want to accomplish, even if it's just running two times a week."

In Wethersfield, young people are also running.

Barbara Bellas was instrumental in founding the Keane Foundation Running Club after having a conversation with the director of parks and recreation and the Central Connecticut Health District about childhood obesity.

The obesity issue in town is no more or less than the national average, Bellas said, but she long had an interest in starting a running group for children and this news seemed like a compelling reason to get it up and literally running.

Parks and Recreation assisted with the administrative side of things and the health district provided a grant. Bellas, a runner herself, reached out for volunteers from each of the town's five public elementary schools.

Each school now offers a six-week program to train for a 5K. The spring session prepares for the Keane Foundation 5K and the fall session trains for the Mikey's Place 5K, a race Bellas was instrumental in establishing.

"We build up to a 5K," she said. "A lot of kids can't run a 5K in six weeks, but we are OK with a jog-walk. We want to encourage them to build on whatever they have."

Runners are encouraged to set goals for themselves and it can be something as simple as running the length of the field where training sessions take place, or counting to 20 as you run before you stop and walk, or running to the next tree.

"We try to make it fun," Bellas said.

The program draws students who have never run before as well as those who already participate in sports.

"I really like when it's the non-athletic kids, when this is all they are getting," she said. "It gives them a sense of accomplishment, success."

This spring 233 students participated in the program. **NL**

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Photos by Allie Rivera

A family business opens

Envy Café features a mother-daughter duo at the helm

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

Business is also a family affair for Nichole Vega.

The owner of Envy Salon on Market Square, Vega recently opened Envy Café, a small eatery that offers freshly made food to go, right next door to her existing business. Her partner in this new endeavor is her mother Michelle Dickinson.

While this business may be in its infancy, serving food is not a new venture for the duo. Dickinson, a retired nurse, formerly owned a restaurant on the Berlin Turnpike called Sal's with her late husband.

"This is really in honor of him," Vega said. "Everybody loved Sal's. I grew up in the back of that place."

Since Dickinson's retirement more than a year ago, Vega had the idea to open another business in the

Nichole Vega, left, is the owner of Envy Salon on Market Square. She recently ventured into the food business with her mother, Michelle Dickinson. The two women now run Envy Café, adjacent to the salon, where they serve freshly made food.

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food industry.

"Nichole always said, 'let's open a bakery or a sandwich shop or something,'" Dickinson said.

Vega has owned the salon on Market Square since 2008 and since then the business had shared the building with a dental office.

"The dentist next door retired and I said to my mom, this is the perfect opportunity," Vega recalled. "It's the perfect little spot."

Having the space connected to the salon open up seemed like an opportune chance to start the business they had been speaking about for years, so in April they had a soft opening for Envy Café.

Vega considers the idea of having a salon and café together an obvious one for the style of business that she runs.

"I think the two do go together," she said. "The atmosphere in the salon is like you're in your friend's house, and if you're at your friend's house, wouldn't they offer you something to eat?"

That notion of treating customers like family carries through into the new business. Vega said all of her cooking comes from her own recipes for food that she makes for her children, ages 5 and 8.

"We do everything from the heart," she said. "I cook like I'm cooking for my kids."

Creating food that's tasty and healthy is an important factor in the creation of their menu.

"I make everything from scratch," Vega said. "We wanted to put something out that is as real as possible, so we roast our own turkey and chicken here, we bake our own desserts. Our bread is the only thing not made here."

"Since we make everything here, we can be more flexible with the customers."

– Michelle Dickinson

"Since we make everything here, we can be more flexible with the customers," Dickinson added. "You can get a good meal for a good price. We're not big, but we're good."

Being flexible and working with customers is one of the elements that both women think sets Envy Café apart. Vega recalled one customer who came in from visiting his wife at the nearby medical center.

He mentioned that his wife's favorite soup was broccoli cheddar, so Vega told him to come in the next day, when she had a large pot of broccoli cheddar soup waiting.

"We put a lot of thought into this place," Vega said. "I can't tell you how many times I'm up at three o'clock in the morning thinking, what will go well with corn chowder?"

They always try to work with their customers, but Vega said there are times when not every order can be exactly as requested due to both the limited size of the establishment and the commitment to quality food.

"There may not be some things on the menu because if we can't get it good and fresh, we won't serve it," she said. "We keep it small and when we're out of it, we're out of it."

In addition to their walk-in service, Envy Café can also deliver within Newington for a $15 minimum order. Vega said many of the delivery customers are older residents in the immediate area who can't necessarily cook for themselves, but want a healthier meal.

"That makes me feel good that they aren't opening a can of Campbell's with nine days' worth of sodium in it," she said.

Vega and Dickinson said that they have found nothing but support from local businesses and residents since their grand opening in late May.

"Everybody in town has been fantastic," Vega said.

They are happy to see business starting to pick up. Vega said that she would have no regrets about this quality time she has shared with her mother, even if the current increase in customers causes a downward shift.

"I really feel happy that we were able to do this," she said. "You can never look back and say, 'I spent too much time with my mother.'"

Both women said they hope residents will stop by the café to give them a chance, and they believe that people will be impressed by all that can be created in the space.

"People see how small it is, but they're amazed at how much we can still do," Dickinson said. "They need to come in and give us a try. Great things come in little packages." **NL**

Envy Café is located at 39 Market Square and is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. It can be reached at 860-519-7966.

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People notes

1. Norma Navarro of Phoenix, Ariz., and **Justin Baldini** of Suffield were married May 14 at Excellence Riviera Cancun Resort in Mexico. She is the daughter of Oscar and Maria Navarro of Las Vegas. He is the son of Alfred and Pamela Baldini of Suffield. Best man was Brandon Postemski, maid of honor was Gabby Huerta. Groomsmen were Al Stanek and Justin Richter, bridesmaids were Allison Urbatsch and Amy Rigollot. The couple now lives in Newington.

2. Newington Girl Scouts were recently honored for achieving scouting's Bronze Award. They are, front from left, **Kaitlin Astorino, Lily Bucchi, Mackenzie Hillman, Denise Sanseverino** and **Morgan Belaski;** back from left, **Katarina Oliveira, Sophia Stickles, Lynzee Zurek, Alexa Gillman, Arianna Bastos, Norah Butler, Elizabeth Omiecinski** and **Maryssa Paladin.**

The following residents graduated from the University of Connecticut: **Anastasia Bilinskaya**, B.S., pharmacy studies; **Thomas Bissell,** BSE, materials science and engineering, **Taylor Bomely,** B.S., nursing; **Kevin Briganti,** B.A., economics; **Nicholas Briganti,** B.A., political science; **Andrew Carrier,** BSE, chemical engineering; **Michael Ciancur,** B.S., physiology and neurobiology; **Derek Dempsey,** B.S., finance; **Michael Disla-Suarez,** BSE, civil engineering; **Rachael Farina,** B.A., psychological sciences; **Peter Feeney,** B.S., exercise science;

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Mateusz Fortuna, BSE, electrical engineering; **Jennifer Frazon,** B.A., history; **Monica Geiger,** B.S., nursing; **Erika Greenblatt,** BFA, general program in art; **Brendan Helberg,** B.A., political science; **Ashraf Islam,** BGS, general studies; **Stephanie Koldras,** B.A., speech, language and hearing science; **Brianna Lutz,** B.S., nursing; **Braden McManus,** B.A., psychological sciences; **Laila Mehar,** B.S., business data analytics; **Krystian Michallik Jr.,** B.S., mechanical engineering; **Robert Oziomek,** B.A., political science; **Hiren Pandya,** B.A., economics; **Carlos Paternina,** B.A., psychology; **Nicole Pierzchalski,** B.A., digital media and design; **Mariam Poonnose,** B.S., biological sciences; **Jonathan Rojek,** N.A., psychological sciences; **Stephanie Sales,** B.A., human development and family studies; **Lyudmyla Susla,** B.S. (twice), allied health sciences and finance; **David Tracey,** B.S., finance; **Eric Tran,** BSE, computer science and engineering; **Daniel Wilczynski,** B.A., economics and **Alexander Zheng,** B.A., English.

Kathryn May, Gabriella Pace and **Jeffrey Rossman** were named to the dean's list at Keene State College.

Joram Sanchez, Mitchell Ambruso, Selina Mendes, Alexander Skonieczny, Michael Rubalsky, Joseph Capossela and **Lillian Solano** were named to the dean's list at Springfield College.

Alizandra Stamm, Steffi Marasigan, Bethany Re and **Samuel Lostocco** were named to the dean's list at the University of Rhode Island.

3. The GFWC Newington/Wethersfield Woman's Club recently installed new officers. They are, from left: **Carolyn Brown**, recording secretary; **Pat Mahoney**, president; **Ursula Hunt,** treasurer and **Nora Bassell,** corresponding secretary. Also named officers were **Mary Hannifan**, vice president and **Ursula Casioppo**, parliamentarian.

Katelyn Dombrowski, Jordan Aprea, Emily Huynh and **Victoria Keen** were named to the dean's list at Lasell College.

Alexander Ericson earned a B.S. degree in civil engineering from Merrimack College.

Amanda Cefaratti earned a bachelor of arts degree from Assumption College.

Michael Galante earned a bachelor of arts degree from Assumption College.

Spencer Gaglione graduated magna cum laude from York College of Pennsylvania with a bachelor of arts degree in professional writing.

Daniel Pak, a student at Ithaca College, earned Scholar All-American honors from the National Wrestling Coaches Association.

The following residents graduated from Eastern Connecticut State University: **James Bronowicki,** bachelor of science, business information systems; **Bryan Costa,** bachelor of science, communication; **Sarah Emerson,** cum laude, bachelor of arts, sociology; **Tyler Fresen,** bachelor of science, business administration; **Alex Fretz,** bachelor of science, sport and leisure management; **Hannah Mamaclay,** cum laude, bachelor of science elementary education and history and social science, and **Luis Rosado,** bachelor of science, psychology.

Michael Mikula was named to the president's list at Farmingdale State College.

Garrett Beaulieu is among the winners of the 12th annual eesmarts Student Contest sponsored by Energize Connecticut partners Eversource, the United Illuminating Company, Connecticut Natural Gas and Southern Connecticut Gas. NL

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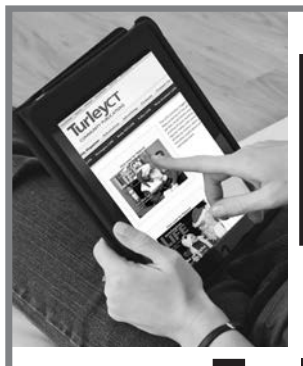

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News roundup

Bierfest returns to Hartford Saengerbund

1. The Hartford Saengerbund, a German-American singing society and social club, presents its biennial Bierfest in the traditional Bavarian style the weekend of Aug. 26-28 on the grounds outside its 719 North Mountain Road clubhouse.

Almdudler Unplugged from Germany will make its American debut playing live music under the big tent and costumed Schuhplattler Dancers will perform ethnic dances. The HSB sword dancers will also make their first Bierfest appearance.,

Wursts, schnitzel, potato pancakes, cakes and pastries will be served, along with German beer and other beverages. The party goes on, rain or shine.

Admission is $10, free for children 17 and younger. Festival hours are 4-11 p.m. on Friday, 2-11 p.m. on Saturday and noon to 6 p.m. on Sunday. For more information call 860-953-8967 or see hartfordsaengerbund.org.

Dealing with opiates

2. In an effort to address the rapidly increasing use of heroin and prescription drug abuse throughout New England, and particularly Connecticut, state Rep. Gary Byron hosted "A Community Discussion: Substance Use & Mental Health Issues" at town hall.

The program was held in collaboration with Newington Human Services, the Newington Police Department, Capital Area Substance Abuse Council, Central Connecticut Health District and Lucy Robbins Welles Library.

Community leaders, law enforcement, mental health professionals and residents used the opportunity to shine a light on the problem of heroin and opiate addiction. They also heard from two mothers who have faced this nightmare and learned from their experiences.

Touch a Truck

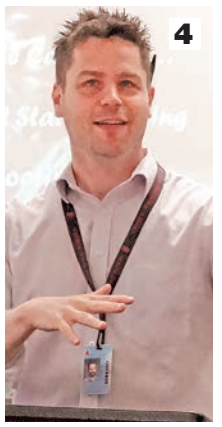
3. The GFWC Newington/Wethersfield Woman's Club welcomed many people at its booth during the 11th annual Touch-A-Truck outside the Lucy Robbins Welles Library. Many won prizes during its raffle and others supported the club by purchasing goods from its bake sale.

All proceeds from the club's many fundraisers go toward community service projects in the two towns, as well as local scholarships.

Thrivent provided construction hats for children, as well as T-shirts.

History teacher honored

4. James Kravontka, a faculty member at Newington High School, was named the Connecticut American history teacher of the year by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. A University of Connecticut graduate, he has been teaching at Newington High for nearly a decade.



In addition to the AP U.S. History class, he also teaches War & The Human Condition. There are plans in the works for him to develop and teach a race, class and gender course.

He has traveled to Munich to learn about Nazi resistance movements, spent a summer in Oxford to study Lincoln, and traveled to the Mississippi Delta to study the civil rights movement. **NL**

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Aleksandra Wichowski

Alicia Abrahams

Victoria Wyble and Emily Lasek

Courtesy photos

Troop 10549 Girl Scouts earn their Silver Awards

Four members of Girl Scout Cadette Troop 10549 recently received their Silver Award, which is the highest award that a Girl Scout Cadette (grades 6-8) can earn. The girls were asked to complete a Take Action Project outside of the scout community.

Each project addressed an issue that the girls felt strongly about and that needed attention. These projects could be done as a small group or as an individual.

Alicia Abrahams' Silver Award project promoted healthy eating by growing a community garden. She started preparing the garden and planting the vegetables in May of this past year. Each week over the summer Alicia weeded, watered and harvested the vegetables as they became ready.

When she delivered them to the Newington Food Pantry, she included recipes for using the fresh vegetables that she grew. In addition, Alicia grew herbs from seed. Her goal was to encourage healthy eating and maybe get people to try new foods.

Aleksandra Wichowski used her love of animals for her project. She wanted to help improve the life of the animals at the Connecticut Humane Society as well as educate adults and children on how to be safe when they are around animals, specifically dogs.

She began by contacting the humane society to determine its needs. Aleks put collection bins in a few local businesses so that their customers could donate these specific items. She collected them every few weeks and delivered them to the society.

She also created a story and coloring book for children and passed it out at the Waterfall Festival and the Lucy Robbins Welles Library's Tales to Tails program that illustrated safe habits when approaching dogs.

Emily Lasek and Victoria Wyble worked together for their awards. Their goal was to make the street safer for the students who walk to and from Martin Kellogg Middle School and Newington High School in the Stoddard Avenue neighborhood.

Their first two propositions were for a crosswalk with a crossing guard and "Children Crossing" signs, which were both denied. Through their research, street evaluations, traffic studies and many meetings with town staff, it was determined that the speed of the cars traveling on Stoddard was a consistent factor.

Together with the town, they were able to have two '"Speed Monitored by Radar" signs installed, as well as an increased police presence on the street and the use of a mobile speed radar trailer with the hope of slowing down cars and increasing safety.

This past fall, they reached out to children and parents during the Waterfall Festival and distributed "Safety in the Community" brochures and activity books that they created. In addition, they met with and educated other Girl Scout troops on ways to be safe in their neighborhoods, with such topics as proper use of a crosswalk, stranger danger and using the buddy system. **NL**

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Slice of LIFE

photos by Lisa Brisson

Thousands took to Mill Pond Park for the 35th Annual Life Be In It Extravaganza. Presented by the town Parks and Recreation Department, the week-long event capped off with a Saturday finale featuring carnival rides, food vendors, a beer garden, music and an evening fireworks show.

The 35th Annual Life Be In It Extravaganza drew a crowd

1. Noely Sanchez of Delicacy Market, one of the day's food vendors, shares a smile with Scrappy the Shriners clown. **2.** Sisters Faith and Ruth Donaghey enjoy their soft-swirl ice cream as they walk around the grounds. **3.** American Legion Post 117's Tom Shields, George Bennett, Richard Linnon and Philip Witam man their booth. **4.** Abby Kristofak, 20 months, gives her 4-year-old sister Caitlyn a hug. **5.** Alex DePace, Tom Tolisano and Mike Vendetti hang out in the beer garden. **6.** Jim Gaiero enjoys a carousel ride with 2-year-old daughter Addison. **7.** Jackson Civitillo, 11, and James Vendetti, 10, fill their cups with cold sugary goodness from the Slush Factory. **8.** Adam Cyganik, 7, wearing the red cap, has a blast on the Dragon Wagon ride. **9.** Sol Braxton, 12, his 10-year-old sister Nyra and their pal Dakota Hawes, 11, feel the fun of riding the Scrambler. **10.** Jack Booty, 4, tries out one of the Sphinx Shriners cars. **11.** The Kakery bakery's Donna Bartlett helps Helena Sampson with a cupcake purchase. **12.** Angela Fasano, 5, cools off from the 90-plus degree temperatures by dancing around the fire engine's water shower.

5

6

7

8

9
Scrambler

10

11

12

August *calendar*

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

2 **Healthy Aging,** noon, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, 95 Cedar St., 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

3 **One Story One Craft,** 1 p.m., registration required, for grades 2-5, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

Behind the Scenes: Sloppy Waffle, 2:30 p.m., Sloppy Waffle restaurant, 2551 Berlin Turnpike, 860-665-8720 or newingtonct.gov/library

4 **Career Conversations Panel,** 6:30 p.m., for grades 6-12, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

Evening Book Discussion, 7 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library

8 **Teen Makerspace,** 6:30 p.m., for grades 6-12, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

9 **Family Yoga,** 6:30 p.m., registration required, for ages 5-8 with a caregiver, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

Credit 101, 6:30 p.m., for grades 6–12, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

National Alliance on Mental Illness, 7 p.m., Newington Senior & Disabled Center, 120 Cedar St., 860-205-9542 or 860-830-2129

10 **Jr. Cookbook Club,** 6:30 p.m., for grades K–2, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

11 **Drum Away the Blues,** 10:15 a.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library

MS Support Group, noon to 2 p.m., Newington Senior & Disabled Center, 120 Cedar St., 860-667-1314 or 860-236-2751

Tech 4 U, 4:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library, also 5:30 p.m. Aug. 25

Zumba, 7 p.m., registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

15 **The Joy of Coloring: An Adult Coloring Group,** 6:30 p.m. Aug. 15, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library, also 2 p.m. Aug. 24

16 **Teen Jewelry Summer Workshop,** 6 p.m., for grades 6–12, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

17 **Hooked on Llamas,** 1 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library

Cookbook Club, 6:30 p.m., for grades 3–6, registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

18 **Tech Trouble-shooting with Teens,** 6:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library

Computer Health Tips, 6:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library

19 **Adult Summer Reading Finale,** 6:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library

20 **Kids' Craft Show,** 10 a.m., for ages 6-13, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

23 **Dinner and a Show,** 6:30 p.m., for ages 5-10, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

24 **Chess Club,** 4 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library

Kickboxing, 7 p.m., registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

25 **Yoga,** 1 p.m., registration required, Lucy Robbins Welles Library

Young Adult Author Panel, 6:30 p.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library

26 **Bierfest,** 4-11 p.m., Hartford Saengerbund, 719 North Mountain Road, 860-953-8967 or hartfordsaengerbund.org, $10 admission, children 17 and younger free, also 2-11 p.m. Aug. 27 and noon to 6 p.m. Aug. 28

31 **Just a Story and a Song,** 10:15 a.m., Lucy Robbins Welles Library

Is your club, community organization, school or house of worship holding an event open to the general public?

If so, please send us the details for inclusion in our calendar.

Email your events to Mark Jahne at mjahne@turleyct.com or mail them to Turley CT Community Publications, 540 Hopmeadow St., Simsbury, CT 06070.

Celebrating Ramadan at the library

Sokaina, Abeer, Miles, and Syed Asar talk to the children about how their family celebrates Ramadan and its focus on reflection, prayer and fasting.

Courtesy photos

The Lucy Robbins Welles Library held two special cookbook clubs for the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. Children listened to "Lailah's Lunchbox" by Reem Faruqi and then made tabbouleh, as well as apple salad with pomegranate molasses.

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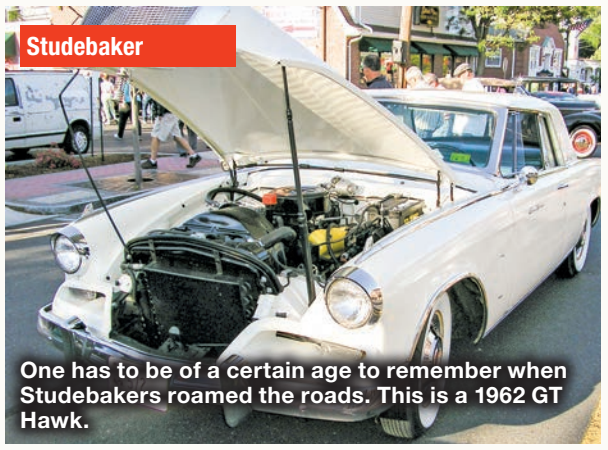
Check out these old beauties

The Newington Chamber of Commerce held its annual Classic Car Night June 9 on Market Square. Four-wheeled memories were everywhere and people enjoyed looking at all kinds of cars, some of them more than 80 years old.

Photos by Mark Jahne

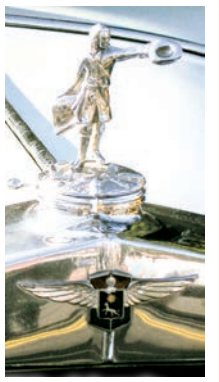


Studebaker

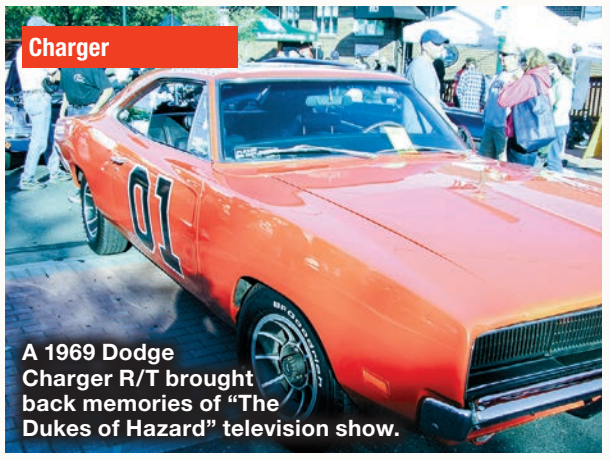
One has to be of a certain age to remember when Studebakers roamed the roads. This is a 1962 GT Hawk.

Ford

This Ford Two-Door Tudon dates from 1931.



This elaborate ornament graces the hood of a 1929 Cadillac LaSalle seven-passenger limousine.



Charger

A 1969 Dodge Charger R/T brought back memories of "The Dukes of Hazard" television show.

Citroen

An open-sided, French-made 1970 Citroën Mehari was not intended for driving in the rain.

Buick

Check out this 1940 Buick Model 51CX Super Convertible.

Brewster

One of the more unusual vehicles was this 1934 Brewster Town Car.

Barracuda

There were numerous sports and muscle cars on display. This is a 440 model Plymouth Barracuda.

BACK TO

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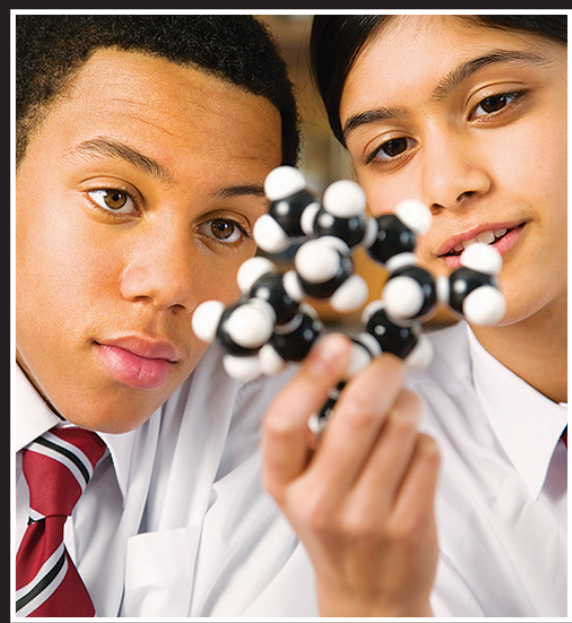

SCHOOL

August 2016

A unique offering

Area high school courses go beyond math and history

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

There are classes offered and taken at nearly every high school in the country – English, history, science, and algebra...but with a diversifying student population, many schools, including schools throughout Connecticut, are taking the opportunity to offer a variety of unique courses.

At Hall High School in West Hartford, many of those core subjects now have specialized classes for upperclassmen to explore.

"In our English classes, we are offering women's literature, with one course called 'Breaking the

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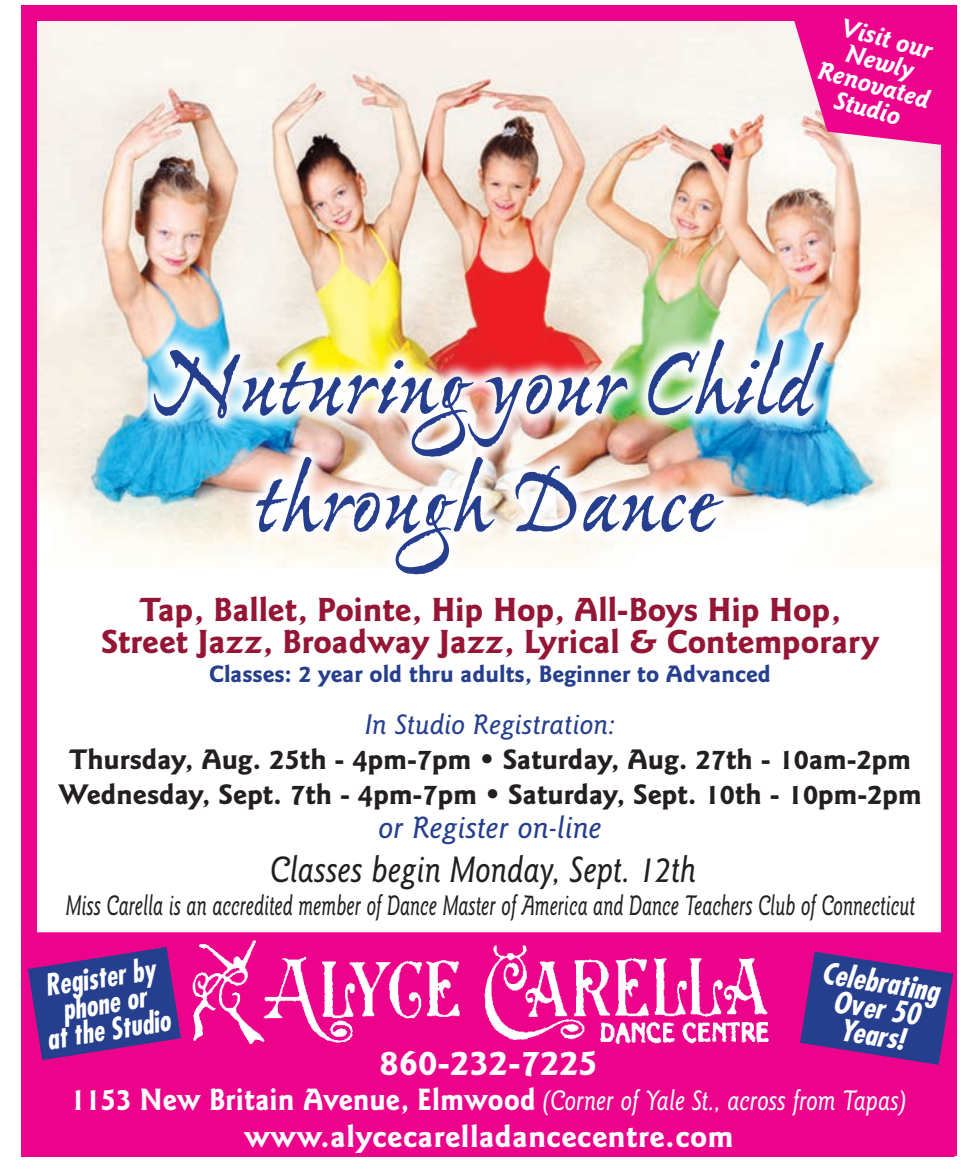
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Silence,' which is classical feminist, and one that's new this year called 'Redefining the Roles,' which provides an evolutionary study of the roles of women in society," Hall High School Assistant Principal John Guidry said. "We also offer history of modern Warfare, which many students really adore."

New this coming year at Hall High School will also be an addition to the school's foreign language department classes in American Sign Language.

"They'll be not only learning the language, but exploring the American Deaf culture and history," Guidry said.

According to Guidry, there has been a push to include ASL as a foreign language at the school for several years, both at the administrative and student level.

"We have rich resources right here in West Hartford," he said. "You see increasingly in the world that that is considered to be a bonafide foreign language."

The language will be open to students in grades nine through 12 in what Guidry said will be an immersive experience with a new teacher who is part of the deaf community. Close to 50 students have already registered for the course for the coming year.

"The students are clamoring for it," Guidry said.

This offering is especially exciting for Guidry because he said it opens opportunities for students to learn not just a language but an entire culture to which they may not have been previously exposed.

"The deaf community is a subculture that exists among us in every location. There are other types of subcultures, but most of them tend to be somewhat geographically restricted. The deaf subculture is not," he said. "It's my personal opinion that it's a subculture that flies below the radar, and people often don't think about it as a subculture."

In addition to exposing students to new cultures, other unique classes in the area are aimed at exposing students to new skills. Simsbury High School will be offering a new course this coming year on fashion design.

"We've piloted this in the summer arts program where students are actually making dresses and other clothing, and it's been very successful," Simsbury High School Principal Andrew O'Brien said.

After seeing what he called a "groundswell of interest" from the summer program, O'Brien said the course was further developed as an elective for students at the high school.

"Along with learning the actual fashion design, they get to learn about the industry and the use of different materials," he said.

"For one project, students would choose a celebrity and they would research their style, their body type,

all that, then, ultimately, they created these outfits."

In addition to teaching students about a previously unexplored area, O'Brien said this class also gives them the opportunity to be creative.

"We had one girl who made an outfit entirely out of Starburst wrappers that were all braided together," he said.

While the summer program primarily focused on women's fashion, the course at the high school will branch into menswear as well.

"It's not only an interesting course for students, but it's a marketable skill as well," O'Brien said.

Providing those marketable skills is a large piece of the push behind courses at Newington High School as well. There, the culinary program has expanded to provide students with real-world kitchen and restaurant experience.

"This is not Home Ec. This is a restaurant atmosphere with catering services," culinary teacher Scott Pestka said. "I teach the kids how

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to smoke their own meat. ...That kind of stuff isn't taught in Home Ec."

The program is part of Newington High School's Culinary Arts Academy, which will be entering its third year this fall. The academy offers courses ranging from Introduction to Cooking to Event Planning to Restaurant Management.

In addition to learning in the classroom, students in these courses get hands-on experience in the food service industry, as the class doubles as a catering service for both school members and the community at large.

Students create daily sandwiches and baked goods that are available for teachers and fellow students to buy as well as working a catering event two to three times per month. In the spring, the culinary students catered the State of the Town dinner as well as the high school football team's banquet with more than 150 people.

As the culinary teacher, Pestka runs his classroom like a restaurant kitchen and demands only the highest quality.

"I always tell the kids, we have to sell quality. There will be times where I look at it and it doesn't look perfect, and they'll take them all apart and redo their chef salad because I wasn't going to sell poor quality," Pestka said. "I'll put my wraps and salads up against anybody any day."

He credits much of the success of the culinary program with the facilities they are able to use, including industrial refrigerators, smokers and ovens.

In Rocky Hill, having the best facilities is possible through a multi-year renovation that has been happening at the high school. One of the most popular classes at Rocky Hill High School is photography.

"We still run it in the traditional sense of the word," Principal Mario Almeida said.

The school has had a dark room for photography and ensured that the space would not be lost in the renovation.

"This year, we have a brand new dark room," Almeida said. "When the school was renovating, we decided it was important enough to make sure it was included."

Almeida said photography remains one of the most popular electives and regularly fills up.

Despite changes in technology, Almeida, and many students with whom he has spoken, has said understanding film development at its basic form is crucial to understanding photography in general.

"I think our students today are so caught up with modern day technology, with Photoshop and digital media, that I think it's important to understand how black and white film development works," he said.

"Many times we thought of changing it to more of a modern, digital photography, but even the kids will tell you that understanding the black and white photography helps them with their digital work."

Through the class, many students have come to find a passion for traditional photography and shown a great deal of talent in the medium, Almedia said.

"One of the units they do is portraits, and they learn how the right background, the right light, the right shading, all of it makes for a better photo," he said. "It's very different than taking a picture with a digital camera and being able to alter it all after."

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"It's about exposing them to something new," O'Brien said, "and our kids our thriving." NL

In each of the unique classes offered, it is new cultures and new skills that are the focus of learning:

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Preparing for a *multicultural* world

Students offered more options when studying world language

by Alison Jalbert
Assistant Editor

In an increasingly multicultural world, it's important for students to be given the opportunity to learn another language – or two – at school.

Students are often able to choose from a variety of options, with some districts offering five or more languages.

Simsbury offers classes in Chinese, French, Latin or Spanish. West Hartford currently teaches five and will be adding a sixth – American Sign Language – in the fall.

Newington provides students with a choice between Spanish, Italian and French, with Wethersfield providing the same options.

Glastonbury offers six – Spanish, Russian, French, Chinese, Latin and Greek. Rocky Hill students can learn French, Latin, Italian or Spanish.

Spanish and French remain popular offerings in most districts. Erin Murray, assistant superintendent of teaching and learning in Simsbury, said students in her district select a language in seventh grade after they all begin with Spanish in fifth grade.

West Hartford world language coordinators Elena Sada and Lucy Cartland said the popularity of Spanish is evident due to the fact that it is the predominant second language in the United States.

"In West Hartford, like in most regions of the country, Spanish is the most widely-spoken language among bilingual and multilingual populations and is the language of the largest percentage of West Hartford immigrants," Sada wrote in an email.

Spanish is the most popular language at Newington High School, according to Rossanna Vassal, coordinator of world language for Newington Public Schools. It is the only language offered in middle school, so most students will continue to study it once they move on to high school. It is the only language in which students will be able to take an Advanced Placement class.

"Many of our students – and parents – will argue that Spanish will be the most useful language to learn," she said.

Rita Oleksak, director of foreign language for Glastonbury Public

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Schools, said Spanish remains the most popular of the six languages offered "by sheer number of students."

Wethersfield students can start studying a world language beginning in seventh grade. Sally Dastoli, director of curriculum and instruction for Wethersfield Public Schools, said Spanish is what most students opt to take.

Many districts are noticing an increase in the number of students choosing to take French.

"French has slowly crept up on Spanish," Murray said. "Some other school districts are eliminating those two languages; we have added teachers and sections."

She believes the growing number of students who choose French is due to the fact that a few years ago, Simsbury offered full-year French to seventh-graders, which was not the case for several years prior; they could take a full year only in grade eight.

"It was very difficult for students to change languages between grade seven and eight, and typically made the change when they arrived at SHS," Murray said. "Therefore, with full year choices made available in grade seven, we are seeing a larger enrollment in French."

Sada and Cartland said French-speaking markets account for five times more business than any other markets, and the largest customer in Connecticut for its products and services is France, followed by Quebec.

"Perhaps our residents are motivated ... by the beauty of French when they choose to study it in our schools," Sada said.

The two most popular languages in Rocky Hill are Spanish and French, according to Kathleen Lessard, world language supervisor at Rocky Hill High School, with the latter on the rise.

"French enrollment has been increasing steadily in the last few years," she said. "As a French teacher in the district, this is very exciting."

With so many districts offering a wider option of languages, Oleksak said it would make sense for enrollment numbers to go down in a certain language, but she is pleased that "French numbers are holding their own."

Some districts in the state and

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nationwide discontinued or de-prioritized French programs when adding in the option to take Chinese, but that is not the case in Glastonbury.

Oleksak believes the interest still exists for French because it is spoken in a variety of countries and settings.

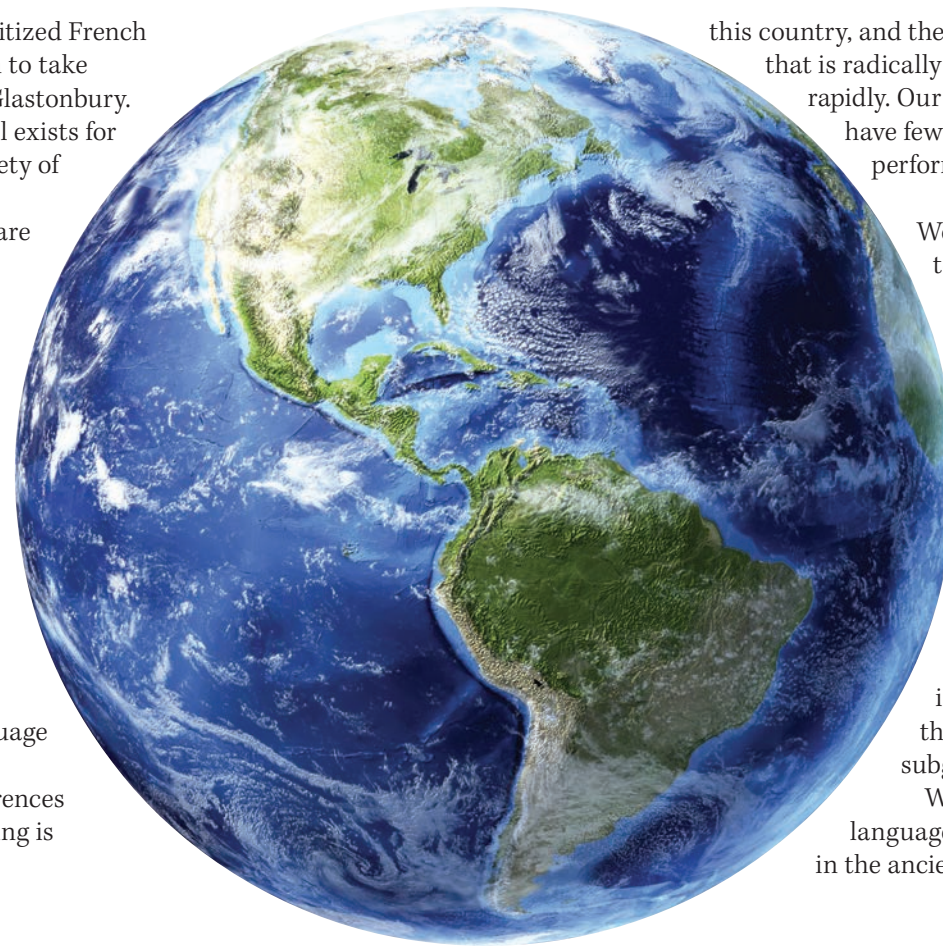
The districts that offer Chinese are noticing a growing interest.

In Glastonbury, the number of enrolled students has increased by 20 for the upcoming school year.

Although Chinese sees lower enrollment numbers than other languages in Simsbury, Murray said students often stay until the AP level, giving it a high retention rate.

It will be expanded to the elementary school level via after school programs to give students a taste of the culture and language.

"The perception is that the language is difficult; however, we have strong teachers who attend methods conferences every year," she said. "Chinese teaching is evolving in this country, and the strategies for teaching a language that is radically different from our own are advancing rapidly. Our Chinese program is unique in that we have few heritage speakers, yet our students perform very well."



Chinese is a new world language in West Hartford. This fall, it will continue to be offered in grades nine through 12, and will expand to the Charter Oak International Academy and the middle schools.

"There, we will start by offering it to six groups of sixth-grade students across the three middle schools," Sada explained. "The language has been very well-received. Although Mandarin is only one of the spoken forms of Chinese, in its written form, it is the Chinese language used by the largest population on the globe, and its importance has grown dramatically in the past decade. Chinese is the third largest subgroup of immigrants in West Hartford."

With so many new options for world language classes, districts are still seeing interest in the ancient languages.

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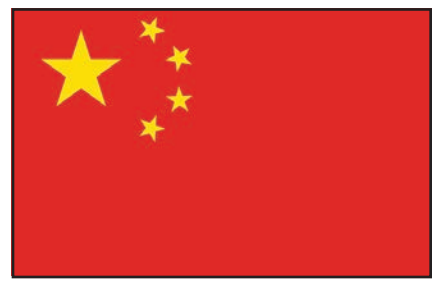
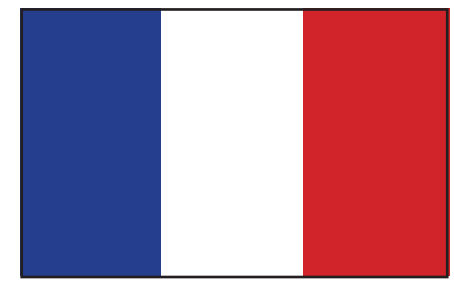

Oleksak said colleagues outside of Glastonbury are impressed upon learning that there are three full-time Latin teachers in the district. West Hartford has a "small but solid demand" among students who want to take Latin or Ancient Greek, often because they wish to pursue a specialization in English or in the medical field.

"Contrary to popular belief, Latin and Ancient Greek are not dead languages; rather, they are the foundation of most common modern languages," Sada said.

"Studies have shown that the study of Latin and Ancient Greek increases English and other world language vocabulary dramatically. … Classic languages never die, since they are present in the foundations of all 'modern' languages."

Glastonbury has offered Russian to its students for almost 60 years and is back on an upswing, Oleksak said. It started in 1957, at the time of Sputnik, but she said Russian continues to be a critical need language.

It is offered through a grant from STARTALK, a program funded by the National Security Agency and administered by the National Foreign Language Center at the University of Maryland.

One of the program's aims is to increase the number of students enrolled in the study of critical-need languages based on national security concerns and global economic competitiveness.

"STARTALK put Russian back on the watch list as a critical language that people should be studying, which gave us a boost," Oleksak said.

"This year, we had elementary and level 1 [courses]. Now we're up to level 1, 2 and 3. There are more students entering the Russian program. Sometimes it's children who have been adopted from Russia who want a connection to their heritage."

Regardless of what languages are offered in a given district, many are expanding the availability into younger grades or making world language a requirement for graduation.

In Wethersfield, starting with the graduating class of 2020, earning two credits in a world language is now a graduation requirement, Dastoli said.

"We are excited about this new graduation requirement, as the acquisition of a second or third language correlates with a higher academic achievement, benefits the development of different cognitive abilities and helps students develop a more positive attitude towards different cultures," she said.

"Being proficient in a second or third language is an amazing skill for our graduates to use in their future careers."

World language classes are electives at Glastonbury High School, yet 96 percent of the students study at least one language, while 15 percent study two and 10 percent study three.

"It's not important which language you study – it's important that you study a language," Oleksak said. **NL**

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Bella the cat has some calico and tiger aspects to her beautiful fur. She is a 2-year-old domestic shorthair. This sweet girl craves an active home with people who have prior experience with cats. She would fare well with teenagers and adults, but not younger children.

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LIVING Your Best LIFE

Why slow down?

Jo Late keeps active by exercising and being involved in multiple activities

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Jo Late is too busy leading an active life to worry about growing older. She follows the advice of Mark Twain, who once said, "Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter."

Late still enjoys life and looks upon every day as a new opportunity. A self-described people person, she enjoys working with and helping others. She is a communicant of the Church of the Holy Spirit.

"I kind of start off the day by going to Mass. It's a nice way to start the day," she said.

She's a familiar face around the Newington Senior & Disabled Center, where she is part of the woodworking group with her husband, Jim.

"Monday, Wednesday and Friday, I'm here for the exercise group," she said. "It's really fun and people get to know each other."

Another passion is the GFWC Newington/Wethersfield Woman's Club. She likes the fact that it is a service organization and the money it raises goes to charitable causes.

"I joined the woman's club about five years ago. I find a lot of camaraderie. I was never a joiner, but there was just something about it," she said. "I just enjoy doing what I'm doing."

She quickly climbed the ladder and served as president for two years. Patricia Mahoney succeeded her earlier this year. Mahoney described Late as someone who is confident and not afraid to take a risk.

"I admire her. She's quiet, but funny. She has a strong faith foundation," Mahoney said.

> **"I am a woman who was born too early. I would have loved to play sports."**
>
> **– Jo Late**

"I'd never been president of anything. I found it a really growing experience," Late said. "The club grew in numbers, which is good."

She never thought she could lead a group and make the tough decisions required of a leader. She was wrong.

Late, a mother of three, was a school volunteer when her children were young. She has long been active with Newington Challenger Baseball, now affiliated with Little League. It's a program specifically designed for children with disabilities.

"I got involved with Challenger because I'm a tomboy, always have been. I am a woman who was born too early. I would have loved to play sports," she said.

She signed up as a buddy for one of the children and became a coach in her second year with the program.

"Challenger – I love it. It's 21 years later and I'm still coaching," she said. "I've seen the kids grow and become adults. I just love the kids."

They were twice able to take the young players to ball games at Fenway Park in Boston. Red Sox officials gave them a full tour of the place and served lunch in the dugout. Late told Chili Davis, the batting coach, of her interest in sports and said she always dreamed of taking a few swings in a big-time ballpark.

He immediately made the arrangements, found someone to pitch, and told her to step up to the plate. The Challenger players gathered around to cheer her on.

"I got to bat in the Boston Red Sox batting cage," she said with a smile.

Late managed to hit the ball a few times but was not close to reaching the Green Monster in left field. It didn't matter, she had the memory of a lifetime.

She is using the talent she developed in woodworking over the past year to put the finishing touches on a large dollhouse that the woman's club will eventually raffle off to raise money. This is not the first time the club has done that.

Late and her husband often travel to Virginia and Kentucky to visit their two children who live out of state; the third lives in Ellington. They have seven grandchildren. Jim is heavily involved with the Newington Historical Society & Trust.

They have lived in town for 47 years. Jim grew up in Hartford and West Hartford and Jo is a Hartford native. She attended Holy Trinity High School in Hartford before advancing to nursing school and becoming a registered nurse. Holy Trinity was the only co-educational Catholic high school in Greater Hartford at that time.

She worked at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center for a while and then spent 25 years as the night nurse at Bel-Air Manor Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in town before retiring at the age of 65. **NL**

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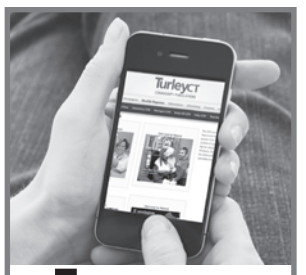

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LIVING Your Best LIFE

Jo Late stands alongside a dollhouse that will be auctioned off by the GFWC Newington/Wethersfield Woman's Club to raise funds for charitable giving. She and other members are putting the finishing touches on the house in the woodworking room at the Newington Senior & Disabled Center.

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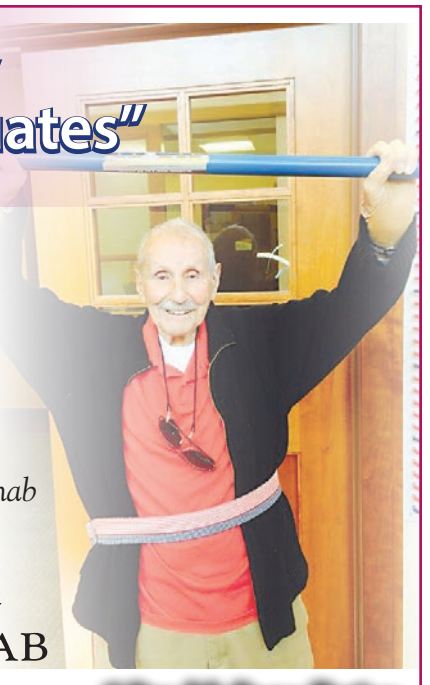

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Sometimes compensatory tools are helpful to let people achieve these tasks with independence. Here are a few helpful tools, gadgets and suggestions.

Elastic shoe laces
Make shoes easy to slip on and off and work well with a long-handled shoe horn. They're especially helpful for people who have trouble bending to reach their feet.

Button hook
A handy gadget to help with pulling buttons through button-down shirts or jackets is especially helpful for people with arthritis, numbness in their fingers, or decreased dexterity.

Reacher
Helps with grabbing hard-to-reach-items and is especially useful for people with poor balance or for preventing falls for people who have trouble bending to reach items.

Sock aid
Helps those who have trouble bending or have precautions against bending pull on their socks.

Handy bar
Portable grab bar that fits on all cars to help with sitting in or standing out of a car, providing a safe and sturdy bar to press down on.

Bed assist bar
A bed rail that needs no installation and provides something for people to hold on to for improved mobility in bed and transfers into and out of bed.

Leg lifter
Helps people with pain or weakness lift their legs in or out of their car or bed.

Zipper pull
Helps pull zippers up and down. Great for people with poor dexterity or visual impairments creating trouble finding their zipper or using it in a timely fashion.

Lift assist cushion
A non-electric and portable cushion that helps people out of a chair. Perfect for people who have already tried therapy training and strengthening and still need that little boost.

Swivel cushion
Turntable cushion that can help with pivoting in or out of a chair.

Shelf paper liner
Can be used as a non-skid material to place under wheelchair cushions or walker trays or used as a placement under plates, cups or utensils. A small piece works well to help people grip the top of a jar to open or close it more easily.

Weighted utensils
Helpful in stabilizing tremors and cutting down on spillage when eating.

1- to 2-inch pipe insulation
Cut into small segments and tape over feeding utensil handles, walker handles or writing implements to improve grip and maneuverability. Especially helpful for people with arthritis or a diminished grasp.

Card holder
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Note: people experiencing a new onset of any of the problems above should schedule an appointment with their physician and consider therapy treatments to assess the extent of the problem and provide exercises and education to prevent further damage.

Submitted by Amanda Bierkan, homecare occupational therapist out of Hartford Health Care at Home

Dealing with *loneliness*

Are you lonely, or do you know a senior who could use some friends? Here are some tips that can help promote social health and connectedness from Patti White, supervisor of senior services in Glastonbury, and a variety of Internet sources.

- **Stay on the go.** Take advantage of public transportation, rides from friends and family members, or town-sponsored transportation geared to senior citizens.
- **Get in touch.** Churches, travel clubs and other special interest groups often have programs designed for seniors. Volunteering is a good way to stay connected with others.
- **Look locally.** Towns usually have senior centers and senior-focused activities that are a great way to keep active and make new friends.
- **Pamper something.** After years of nurturing family members, seniors might enjoy nurturing a pet if they are able. Caring for a garden or indoor plants is also helpful.
- **Make meals a social occasion.** Food provides an excellent opportunity to spend time with other people in a variety of settings.
- **Try technology.** Teach a senior how to use a computer and discover the world of the Internet and applications such as Skype. Many senior centers offer computer classes.
- **Get classy.** Colleges, community centers, church groups and others offer classes that appeal to people of all ages. Check out the knitting class at the local yarn shop or classes through the local adult education program or a nearby community college, learn to plan an instrument or a new language.
- **Read to children in schools.**
- **Participate in intergenerational activities.**
- **Explore mindfulness and spirituality.**

Source: various Internet sources

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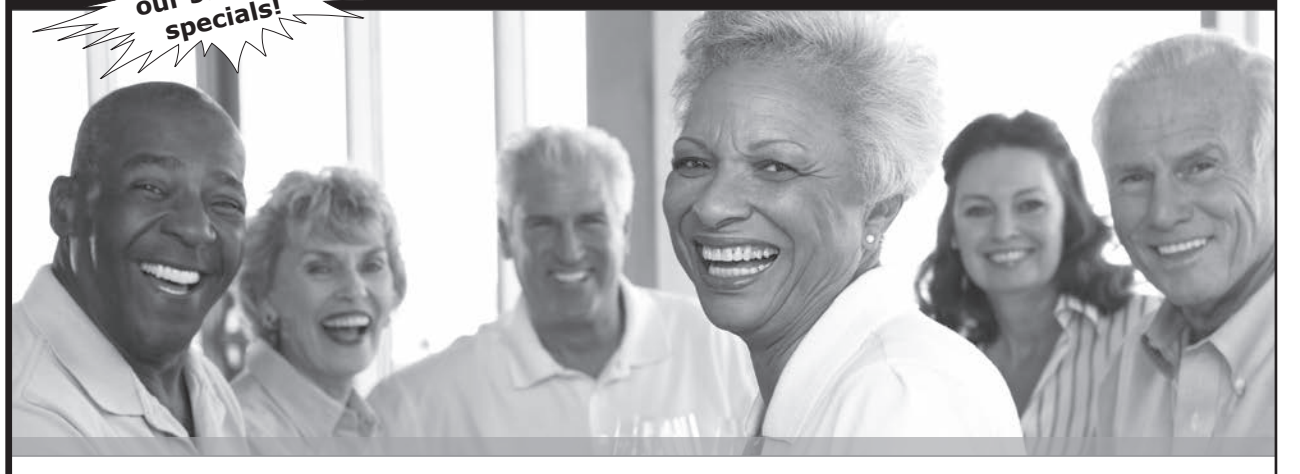

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A Department of Hartford Hospital

Deming Young Farm hosts garden party

Newington Parks & Recreation hosted a garden party June 29 at the community gardens on the property of the Deming Young Farm on Church Street. Those who rent public plots there were encouraged to come and meet their fellow gardeners while enjoying food provided by the Rooster Co. restaurant. Donald Woods from Stonehedge Landscape & Garden Center was on hand to offer agricultural tips and participants were encouraged to take part in a recipe exchange.

Karolina and David Rametta are growing organic cucumbers, squash, kale, tomatoes, kohlrabi and more.

Gardeners socialize at picnic tables. In addition to free food they were invited to try two varieties of infused water: lemon, cucumber and mint or strawberry, mango and lime.

Photos by Mark Jahne

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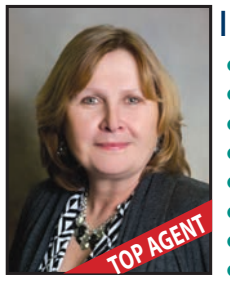

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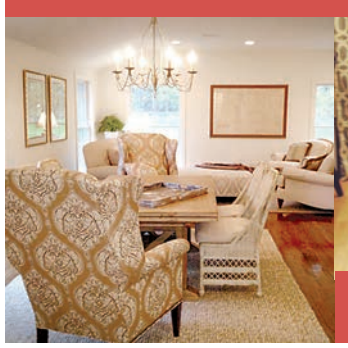

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Editorial

Why is it so hard to accept differences?

We read every day or see on TV or the Internet, about violence perpetrated around the world by members of one group against members of another.

The differences may be racial, national, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation or others. Fear of those who are in some way different sparks some people to commit acts of violence, while others take on bigoted attitudes and still others simply avoid those who seem different.

Why is there so much mistrust? Why is there so much fear? Why is it so easy for people to dislike or distrust an entire group of human beings?

The answers are not simple. These problems and attitudes have existed for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Humans tend to be tribal, whether that tribe is based upon race, ethnicity, nationality or faith. There is a tendency to interact with those who are most like us because they make us feel good about who we are.

Americans can't deal in a civil manner with our politics. We pick a side, a philosophy and then refuse to listen to any other ideas or opinions. Those "other" people, be they liberals or conservatives, clearly don't have a clue. They can't be patriotic Americans because they hold different views than we do.

So we shout them down, shut them out, insult them and proclaim they are the spawn of the devil. They're not. They're just fellow citizens who have a different outlook. We need to turn off the emotion and turn up the civility.

When Justin Trudeau was elected prime minister of Canada this past year, he used part of his acceptance speech to encourage his followers to treat members of the opposition party like neighbors, not enemies. He deserves credit for making such a unifying statement.

Can you imagine Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton doing that? It's not even likely to happen at the local level in an election for mayor or a seat on the school board.

Look at all the richness of life that can be gleaned by learning about and accepting people who are different in one or more ways. Reaching out to them and spending a little time with them can eliminate the fear, break down the barriers, and enable us to better understand them.

The more you know someone, the less threatened you feel around them. You come to realize that they share many of the same values you have, like loving their children and striving to live a good life.

Yet we continue to fall back on old habits, old stereotypes and old fears. Why? Perhaps because it's easy. Breaking down those stereotypes and beliefs is much harder. But it's worth the effort. **NL**

Letter

Disappointed with council

To the Editor:

On July 6, I attended the special meeting of the Town Council and waited for one hour and 45 minutes while the council debated a contract for Tanya Lane, the new town manager. I wondered why this could not have been added to the agenda for the regular meeting of July 12, but I guess this urgency revolved around the fact that the majority on the Town Council voted to hire Lane without offering her a contract.

During the meeting at which Lane was appointed, Councilor Carol Anest was denied a chance to ask a question, contrary to Robert's Rules of Order, and Lane was appointed without a contract, and when it became Mayor [Roy] Zartarian's turn to cast his vote, he practically stood up and proclaimed his approval. I thought he was going to start waving a flag.

Fast forward to the special meeting of July 7. The council is to discuss, in executive session, Lane's contract. There were only two citizens attending that meeting.

During public participation, Gary Bolles lambasted the Town Council, and rightly so, for hiring Lane without a contract. To me, it didn't seem like much thought was given to Lane until that night; after all, it took almost two hours to make a decision in a process that sounded very contentious and should have been dealt with in a more timely manner.

After the councilors returned and announced that Lane will be earning $137,000 a year plus benefits, I sat in front of the council and said my piece. I, too, chided the majority on the council for their foolhardy actions.

Once again, when the mayor's turn came to vote on the contract, he responded with a resounding "aye." Mr. Mayor, you have every right to express your enthusiasm, but to constantly wave the flag when voting, especially on this issue, gives me and others, I am sure, the perception that you are practicing favoritism towards Lane.

Personally, I expected a lot more, but I guess the platform of transparency (remember "have you had enough?") was just an empty promise, as was the promise of fiscal responsibility.

Finally, I would like to congratulate Lane on her appointment, and on having to put up with all these trials and tribulations. You are a true asset to our town.

– Michael J. Fox

Newington LIFE

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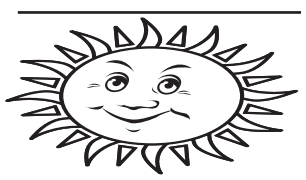

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BY MARK DIXON
WFSB METEOROLOGIST [AMS]

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51 to 100	Moderate
101 to 150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups
151 to 200	Unhealthy
201 to 300	Very Unhealthy
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This summer, and going forward you may notice a higher frequency of "Air Quality" Alerts here in Connecticut – and there is a reason why. It is not because the quality of air is any worse, it has to do with a change in the criteria (the threshold) used to issue the alert, by the EPA. **NL**

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